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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03 IO-13 /088 W
----------062056 061707Z /43
R 061231Z FEB 7
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1062
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSAELM
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IS
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S NEGLECT OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

REF: TEL AVIV 1540

1. UNDER THE TITLE
"THERABINIZATION OF BEGIN" THE FOLLOW-
ING ARTICLE BY AVRAHAM SCHWEITZER WAS PUBLISHED BY HAARETZ
ON FEBRUARY 2:

2. BEGIN TEXT MR. BEGIN HAS NOT BEEN HAVING AN EASY TIME
THESE PAST TWO WEEKS. THE EGYPTIANS CALLED HIM SHYLOCK,
WHILE THE JEWS SHOWED NO SIGNS OF ENTHUSIASM OVER HIS
LEADERSHIP, DIPLOMATIC SKILL OR PERSONALITY. IN THE LAST
TWO WEEKS BEGIN EMBRACED NO PRESIDENTS, NOR DID HE KISS
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ANY AMBASSADORS, WHILE HIS GOVERNMENT WAS IN TROUBLE. THE
SOURCE OF THE TROUBLE - FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH (AND SHARON
TO A RATHER MARGINAL EXTENT).

3. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT STATESMEN HAVE A SMALL HORIZON;
THE FUTURE EXTENDS ONLY TO THE EVENING OF THE FOLLOWING

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DAY AND WHAT HAPPENED THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY IS OF NO
INTEREST. BUT OBSERVERS HERE ARE NOT SUFFERING FROM LOSS
OF MEMORY: WHAT IS HAPPENING TO BEGIN, HAPPENED TO HIS PRE-
DECESSOR LESS THAN A YEAR AGO. IN SHORT, WE ARE WITNESS-
ING THE BEGINNING OF A PROCESS WHICH COULD EASILY BE BRANDED
THE RABINIZATION OF MR. BEGIN. THE PRIME MINISTER WILL HAVE
TO UNDERTAKE HARD DECISIONS TO AVERT THE POLITICAL FATE WHICH
FIRST PURSUED AND THEN OVERTOOK MR. RABIN.

4. LIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, MR. BEGIN CAME TO POWER IN THE
WAKE OF AN UPHEAVAL. LIKE HIS RORERUNNER, HIS ONLY TASK
WAS TO REESTABLISH THE POLITICAL BALANCE TO ENABLE SOCIETY TO
FUNCTION AND GROW PEACEFULLY. MR. RABIN FAILED. HE DID NOT
KNOW HOW TO STOP OR TO WITHDRAW TO A NEW AND SOLID LINE. IN
THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOVERNMENT IS TESTED BY ITS ECONOMICS.
IT WAS NOT FOR NOTHING THAT THEY CALLED RABIN'S THE RABIN-
RABINOWITZ FOVERNMENT.

5. MR. BEGIN STARTED OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT. MORE IMPORTANT
STILL: HE HAD THE HEAVEN-SENT GIFT OF MR. ANWAR SADAT
WHO CAME TO JERUSALEM. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WERE ENTITLED TO
BELIEVE THAT THEY HAD A PRIME MINISTER WHO WOULD GIVE THEM
STABILITY FROM OUTSIDE. NO ONE PAID ANY ATTENTION TO
THE FINANCE MINISTER AND THERE WERE NO STRIKES...BUT
WHEN THE GODSEND BEGAN TO GROW WOUR, AND MISTER PRIME
MINISTER AND MISTER PRESIDENT BEGAN SLINGING MUD AT EACH
OTHER, PEOPLE'S EYES TURNED TO MR. EHRLICH. BUT MR.
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EHRLICH HAS NOTHING TO OFFER, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE AS LONG
AS NO SOLUTION IS AVAILABLE FOR ISRAEL'S POLITICAL ISSUES,
THOUGHT S OF ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS CANNOT BE ENTERTAINED.
RABIN SLIPPED AND FELL BECAUSE OF THE AMOUNT OF DEFENSE EX-
PENDITURES OUT OF THE NATION'S ECONOMY. IF MR. BEGIN DOES
NOT CHANGE THAT, HE WILL FIND THE SAME THING HAPPENING TO HIM.

6. GOVERNMENTS STAND OR FALL BECAUSE THIER HEADS SUCCEED OR
FAIL TO ESTABLISH CONDITIONS IN WHICH FINANCE MINISTERS
AND THEIR COLLEAGUES CAN GIVE THE PUBLIC WHAT IT WANTS ACCORDING
TO THE AMERICAN CONSUMPTION MODEL (IF IN MORE MODERATE
AMOUNTS) AND TO CONSOLIDATE THE HOPE THAT NEXT YEAR THEY
CAN BUY STILL MORE.

7. BEN GURION MANAGED TO DO THIS FOR ESHKOL, ESHKOL FOR
SAPIR, EVEN GOLDA FOUND AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, IN SPITE
OF OCCASIONAL BOUBTS. MR. RABIN WAS THE FIRST PREMIER WHO
FAILED AND WHO DEMANDED THAT HIS FINANCE MINISTER FUNCTION
IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DO SO TO
THE SATISFACTION OF THE PUBLIC. IF MR. BEGIN MISSES THE
CHANCE PROVIDED BY THE SADAT VISIT, EHRLICH WILL BE LIKE

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RABINOWITZ BEFORE HIM, AND BEGIN WILL LOOK LIKE RABIN.
IT WOULD ONLY BE FITTING THAT SUCH A MODEL SHOULD DETER
BOTH BEGIN AND THE LIKUD. END TEXT

8. COMMENT: THIS ARTICLE BY A RESPECTED OBSERVER, (AN
EXPERIENCED POLITICAL COLUMNIST WHO RECENTLY WAS SHIFTED
BY HIS PAPER FROM POLITICAL TO ECONOMIC WRITING AND WHO
RECENTLY RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO THE U.S.) IS AMONG THE MORE
THOUGHTFUL ANALYSES OF THE PITFALLS FACING BEGIN IF HE
CONTINUES TO FOCUS HIS ATTENTION EXCLUSIVELY ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND NEGLECTS INTERNAL MATTERS. AS WE DISCUSSED
IN REFTEL, BEGIN WILL NEED TO DEVOTE SOME ATENTION TO
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE IN-
TRINSIC IMPORTANCE OF THOSE ISSUES BUT ALSO BECAUSE STRAIN
OVER THEM IS LEADING TO FACTIONAL DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN
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HIS OWN LIKUD. AS SCHWEITZER INDICATES, IF BEGIN IS PERCEIVED
BY THE ISRAELI PUBLIC TO HAVE FAILED IN EXTERNAL MATTERS,
ITS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH HIM ON DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WILL BE
THAT MUCH GREATER.
LEWIS

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To: STATE
Type: TE
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